

(Region One Historical File)

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THE ORGANIZATION OF THE FOREST SERVICE; ITS REQUIREMENTS

AND OPPORTUNITIES.

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If one would understand the character and fibre of any one of the great modern nations, he must go back to the various racial elements which amalgamated with each other in the beginning of things to form the nation of the present day. He must study the varicus tribes or peoples of this race and that which contributed something of their blood or language or institutions toward the making of a new nationality. In like manner, to thoroughly understand the Forest Service, as it has been developed to what it is today, we must go back to the various elements which, coming from different sources, from different sections of the country and from different sorts and conditions of men all over the United States have been brought together and welded into this ^{branch} plan of the federal government.

In 1878 an insignificant little Bureau was organized in the Department of Agriculture at Washington, comprising at first but a handful of men, whose object as fixed by Congress was to investigate forest conditions in the United States and diffuse information concerning them for the instruction of the people at large. This

Bureau of Forestry, as it was then called, increased slowly in numbers and gradually extended the scope of its work. For many years it was limited to duties of a purely investigative and educational character. It drew its recruits from scientific and technical men, botanists, and almost wholly men of college training, who took hold enthusiastically of the work of finding out something about the trees and forests of America and putting their information in such form that it could be used by the few timberland owners in the eastern states who began to see the necessity for changing the old methods of handling woodland. In course of time, forest schools were established in connection with a few of the eastern universities and a steadily increasing number of young, technically trained college fellows augmented the ranks of the Bureau of Forestry, extending its investigative work over a wider and wider field.

In the meantime, beginning in 1891, the Presidents began to create National Forests out of the timbered portions of the public domain west of the Mississippi River. In 1897, these National Forests, or Forest Reserves as they were then called, were put under administration but under the direction of an entirely separate department of the government and of a wholly different class of ^{men} work from that which composed the Bureau of Forestry. In selecting rangers, guards, and supervisors for the newly established Forest Reserves

the Land Office drew upon the typically western types of men who had been in the forefront in the settlement and development of the states on this side of the Mississippi. Cowboys from the stock ranges, lumberjacks from the logging camps, miners, public land surveyors, with a goodly sprinkling of western politicians, were brought together into the personnel of the new administrative force. The administration of the Forest Reserves by western men of this type was built up and extended as new areas were added to these national timber holdings until 1905. In that year the Bureau of Forestry and the force of Supervisors and rangers in the west were brought together under one organization, the Forest Service of the present day.

It is very significant that the new organization, in combining under one head scientific and technical work on the one hand and the actual administration of vast timbered areas on the other, brought together types of men so diametrically opposed to each other in training and experience. It threw the young college graduate, fresh from his forestry course, and the western cowpuncher ~~into the same work~~^{Camp}. The man who had polished off his American schooling with a few months of study in the forest universities of Germany spread his blankets with the lumberjack whose schooling had been the rough and ready one of the logging camps. Best of all, the combination has become what a chemist would term a chemical union, its various elements becoming integral parts of the whole and forming, not a loose mixture of the two

elements but a new substance, wholly distinct from either. The strongest and most admirable feature of the Forest Service has been its ability to draw upon all classes of men, each class furnishing experience and training and qualifications which the others lacked, and to weld them together in a united, enthusiastic body of public officers. Its members, in spite of their divergent interests and experience before entering the Forest Service, have acquired to a marked degree the rare faculty of recognizing each other's worth and the value of each other's training, and have become imbued with a common esprit de corp.

The Forest Service has continued ever since to draw upon the same various types and classes of men which made up its personnel in the beginning and will continue to do so for all time. The men in charge of its grazing work are almost without exception former stock raisers and range riders from the western states. In the administration of the public lands under its charge, you will find lawyers taken from the schools or from the Departmental offices in Washington, miners of long and practical experience in western camps, western ranchers, and men identified with western agricultural colleges whose experience makes them of peculiar value in determining what lands in the National Forests have agricultural possibilities and should be opened to the settler. In the branch of the Service which handles the timber on

our National Forests, there are trained foresters from the schools working together with lumbermen who never saw a university but who have had many years' experience in the mills and woods. We need all of these classes of men, the one as much as the other, and we aim to make the Service an organization in which each member will meet the full recognition due the value of his experience and the character of his work without regard to the particular brand of his training or whether or not he can write a few extra letters at the end of his name.

The unit of the Forest Service upon which the entire organization is built up is the National Forest. Each National Forest comprises an area which forms naturally a topographic unit, as the basin of a large river, or one slope of a main divide, all parts of which are relatively easy of access from some central headquarters. Its size ranges from 500,000 to 2,000,000 acres, depending upon the demand for the use of that particular area by the public and the consequent amount of administrative work which is entailed. Each National Forest is under the charge of a Forest Supervisor whose position may be likened to that of a Division Superintendent in a great railroad system. The Forest Supervisor has under him a force of rangers and guards who form the rank and file of the Service. He divides the area in his charge into districts, placing each under one of the older and more experienced rangers. The other rangers and guards

are grouped as a rule under the District Ranger and work, under the immediate supervision of the District Ranger on the ground, on patrolling for fires by riding the trails and visiting high lookout points, or scaling timber, burning brush, and supervising the logging in timber sales, or constructing cabins, trails, telephone lines, or running surveys, or any one of the thousand details connected with the administration of a large tract of land.

The Supervisor is directly assisted as a rule by a Deputy Supervisor, or in some cases, a head ranger. The Supervisor or his Deputy handles the large volume of office work connected with every National Forest, the accounts, records of sales and permits, reports to the central office, and instructions to the men in the field. In addition to these duties, they spend as much time as possible out on the Forest supervising the work on the ground, handling some of the more important details in person, and instructing the rangers ⁱⁿ the various phases of administrative work.

The forest guards and rangers are drawn almost exclusively from western men of the types previously mentioned who live near the Forest and whose practical experience with western conditions and in the industries connected with the use of the resources of the Forest is the essential qualification for their position. They are required to pass a Civil Service examination whose educational requirements are not strict but which demands

a good working knowledge of timber estimating and logging, the stock business and range conditions, simple surveying, and such matters as packing and the other work required of a mountaineer. One of the strongest elements in the Forest Service, however, is the large number of western young men, above the average ranger in educational qualifications, who have recognized in this position an opportunity to enter the Service and through experience and practical training in its work fit themselves for rapid promotion to more responsible positions. Many of our strongest men who are now most relied upon in the more important administrative work entered the Forest Service as rangers or guards; and I may add that the opportunities of this character are now practically as good as they ever were.

On the National Forests where the proper handling of timberlands and the conduct of timber sales are of primary importance, another administrative officer known as the Forest Assistant has been added to those already mentioned and as rapidly as men are available for this position at least one will be assigned to every Forest. It is here that the Service has infused the new element in the system, the body of technically trained men which was gradually built up under the old Bureau of Forestry into the western personnel of rangers and supervisors whose training was of the rough and ready sort and whose main qualification was their direct familiarity with western conditions. The Forest Assistant

as a rule is a college trained man. He enters the Service through a technical examination covering advanced forestry and its allied sciences, preparation for which requires ordinarily a course in a forest school. His work on the Forest is indicated by this requirement. He gives his time primarily to the administration of timber sales and the application of such forestry as is possible to the conditions in each case. He supervises the preparation of estimates and plans for the handling of various bodies of timber and the marking of the trees which are to be cut. He makes as a rule the more extended and accurate surveys which are necessary and prepares maps, reports on the more technical matters connected with the administration, and, where possible, conducts scientific studies of trees and forests on the unit to which he is assigned. In addition to these duties, he assists the Supervisor in general administrative work and, if he has the right stuff in him, often qualifies in a few years for a supervisorship or other all round administrative work.

The inflexible rule has been established in the Forest Service that supervisorships and deputy supervisorships shall be filled only by the promotion of men in subordinate positions. The majority of our Supervisors entered the Service as rangers and have been promoted to their present positions because of their energy, and the capacity they have developed for handling men and for conducting efficiently the various features of the work. In many

cases, however, Forest Assistants who have added to their technical training good business sense and that peculiar faculty which a down east Yankee would call "management", or the ability to get the best results possible from a given expenditure of time and effort, and who have shown the capacity to acquire a thorough grasp of western conditions, have become Deputy Supervisors or Supervisors within three or four years after entering the Service.

Another inflexible rule which has aided greatly in strengthening and building up the personnel of the Forest Service is that, unlike many other Departments of the government, seniority is wholly secondary to merit as a basis for promotion. The man who is advanced to the responsible position is the man who has shown the best capacity to do the work which it requires without regard to the length of his service or the qualifications which secured his initial appointment. It is this principle which has welded together so admirably all the diverse types of men upon whom the Forest Service has drawn for recruits. There are many cases where the western ranger has been promoted over the man of college training and many other cases where the college bred Forest Assistant has been advanced to responsible positions in preference to the western ranger. Everyone has imbibed this religion of the Forest Service, namely, that all its members will receive full recognition for their ideas and their work for what both are actually worth, and that the man who can

handle each particular line of work best is the man who will be advanced most rapidly in it. The ranger, whose schooling has been in the logging camps or on the stock ranges, has therefore no jealousy toward the Forest Assistant whose schooling has been in the university class room, because he knows that the college degree of the Forest Assistant will not, of itself, make a particle of difference in the promotion of one man more rapidly than the other. He does know, however, that if the college trained man shows himself by his work to be a more efficient Forest officer than the man who has had no such training, his promotion will be the more rapid. The result has been an absence of friction to a very marked degree and a wholesome rivalry in the spirit of that fine old sporting phrase, "May the best man win". The principle of promotion for merit rather than length of service combined with the fact that the entire Forest Service stands on an impregnable Civil Service basis, that the standing of its members cannot be affected by any change in party administration, and that local pull, political or otherwise, has nothing whatever to do with its appointments or promotions, has given the Forest Service a unity, an esprit de corps, and an enthusiastic cooperation among all its members for the furtherance of its work which I feel safe to say have never been equaled, at least in any body of public employees.

One of the most attractive and in many respects the most responsible positions in the Forest Service is that of Supervisor. The Supervisor is the keystone of the system. He is the officer in direct and responsible charge of the actual work on the ground. He originates in very large measure the policies which are followed in the various features of the work and at the same time he executes these policies and gets the work done. Upon him the morale of the force and the general efficiency of the whole work to a very large degree depend. He is the hardest working member of the force and the one who will in the long run determine the success or failure of the broad policy of public ownership of these vast areas of timbered land and their administration in the permanent interests of the people.

The units of the Forest Service, the National Forests, are grouped for general supervision and central control into six Districts. The District, of which Missoula is the central headquarters, for example, includes 25 National Forests in Montana, Northern Idaho, Northern Wyoming, and the Western Dakotas. To secure uniformity in the various features of the work conducted by these 25 different Supervisors who of necessity are somewhat isolated; to shape the larger and broader matters of policy which cannot be determined by the conditions on a single Forest; to inspect the work done by the various

local officers as is necessary from time to time in order to make sure that the work in all respects is kept up to the established standards; and to form a clearing house for new ideas and improved methods which are initiated by different field officers and should be put into general use; for all of these reasons a central authority is needed. This is furnished by the District Office.

The members of the force which administers each National Forest, with the single exception of the Forest Assistant, are general administrative officers. From the Forest Supervisor down, they handle all features of National Forest business and deal with all classes of forest users, the purchaser of timber, the stockman who desires summer range, the settler who seeks to make homestead entry of a tract of farming land alike. From the diverse character of the work, it is necessary that the local men be all round administrative officers, qualified to handle every phase of the work on the immediate area intrusted to their charge. In the central office of the District this rule is reversed. The force is composed largely of specialists, men who have developed marked capacity in handling special lines of work and who are therefore best qualified to direct the conduct of that particular line of work on the National Forests which are included in the District. The District personnel is therefore divided into several Offices, the men working in each Office devoting their entire time

to some special phase of National Forest administration. The District Office of Silviculture directs the handling of the timbered areas in the National Forests, the making of estimates and working plans, and the sales of timber. One of its branches is concerned exclusively with the establishment of forest nurseries, the collection of seed, and the planting of areas in the National Forests where natural reforestation is insufficient. The members of this Office, which includes several experienced lumbermen, inspect on the ground the timber sales that are made from time to time, the methods of cutting which are employed by the local officers, the scaling of the logs, the disposition of slash, and all other matters connected with good logging. A separate Office directs the administration of the stock ranges on the National Forests, the necessary regulations to prevent over use of the range, the allotments of proper ranges to sheep and cattle, the employment of hunters to exterminate wolves and other predatory animals, and all other matters connected with the livestock interests as far as they are concerned in the use of the resources of the National Forests. A third Office, known as the Office of Operation, handles the appointment and promotion of the Forest officers needed to carry on the work of the District, the allotment of funds to each Forest, the exact and frequent records of expenditures which are necessary to meet the exacting requirements of the United States Treasury,

and the protection of the National Forest areas from fire. A branch of this Office handles all matters relating to the public lands in the national Forests, the granting of rights-of-way for roads, irrigation ditches, power plants, and special uses of every character, the applications of settlers for the opening of tracts of farming land to homestead entry, the survey of boundaries, and the examination of areas which are recommended for addition to National Forests or for elimination from their boundaries. This Office includes also the District Engineer, who has in charge the construction of improvements by the government on the national Forests, roads, trails, telephone lines, bridges, and buildings which are required for their proper administration and protection.

The branches of the District Office are thus as many and as diverse as the actual work on the ground. Our duty is to administer a vast tract of land in the interests of its owners and we aim to conduct and extend our administration along every line needed to properly utilize and conserve each resource in the domain intrusted to us. The District Office thus aims to bring together in a force of some twenty or twenty five administrative officers the best in thought and experience which the Service has developed in ^{each of} its many lines of work, in order that every phase of the administration on every national Forest may be kept up to the best that we have yet attained

in work of that special character. The members of the District force are drawn from the Supervisors and Forest Assistants in the field, experience in each special line of work being the one essential qualification. The chiefs of the various branches of the central office by constant inspection of the work on the National Forests and constant mingling with the Supervisors and rangers are kept in close touch with the actual conditions of the work on the ground. To bring the central office still closer to the men who are actually doing the work in the forests and on the ranges, Supervisors, Deputy Supervisors, and Forest Assistants are detailed from time to time for a few weeks to assist in the central office. In these ways we endeavor to have the men in the central office understand as fully as possible the point of view of the men in the field and the conditions with which they deal and at the same time to have the men in the field understand the point of view of the man at the desk in the District Office and the difficulties and problems which he has to contend with. In these ways only is it possible to secure an efficient working of the entire system without friction and with a full understanding of the other fellow's point of view.

The District Offices, each under its District Forester, handle all of the business of the national Forests which is not transacted directly by the Supervisor or his rangers. None of the routine business of

the Service ordinarily goes beyond the District Office. The six Districts, however, are under the supervision of the Forester at Washington who, with a small corp of the most experienced and able men in the Service, forms the final authority and center of the entire system. The work of the Forester and his immediate assistants in Washington, in so far as the administration of the National Forests is concerned, is limited almost entirely to determining the broader questions of policy which apply to the entire country rather than to the conditions within any one of the six Districts. The Supervisors ^{and} in the District offices form the working force, the men who transact the business and who deal directly with administrative matters on the ground. The Forester directs the general policy of the entire administration, prevents the District Offices from drifting apart in any of the main features of the work and acts as final authority in all cases of appeal. The aim of the Service is thus to bring the actual work of administration as close as possible to the forest areas themselves and to the people who use them through the rangers, the Supervisors, and the District Offices throughout the West. Combined with this is the central and final authority in the Forester at Washington necessary to hold together and effectively direct work of such magnitude extending over eighteen of the States and Territories.

A word, in conclusion, to those of you who contemplate fitting yourselves for work in the Forest Service, may not be out of place. Two courses are open to you. If you are sufficiently familiar with the conditions governing the lumbering and stockgrowing industries in your portion of the West and with the craft of the mountaineer to meet the practical requirements of the Rangers' examination, you may enter the Service directly as a Forest Ranger. If you lack these practical qualifications but wish ^{to take} the quickest and most direct road into the ranks of the Service, my suggestion would be to spend a year in a good logging camp and put in your extra time in learning something about forest surveys and estimating timber.

Or you may supplement your college work by a course at a Forest School and so fit yourself for the far more advanced and technical examination for the Forest Assistant. This position commands at the outset a somewhat higher salary and the more thorough training which it requires gives a man a far better equipment for the work of the Service and should in the long run insure more rapid promotion to responsible positions.

Whichever of these courses you choose, however, your attitude in entering the Service should be that of the apprentice who enters a large commercial or manufacturing business - namely, with a mind made up

to begin at the bottom and learn the business from the ground up. This applies to the prospective Forest Assistant fully as much as to the prospective Ranger. You will learn a deal in the college and Forest School, but you will have a deal more to learn from actual experience in the woods and hard knocks. You will know far more than the Rangers with whom you will be associated about botany and technical forestry - but they can give you cards and spades on fighting fires and building trails and a dozen other practical matters which are fully as needful for the efficient forest officer as the learning of all the schools in Christendom. You can learn much from them if you are willing to do so; and you can learn far more by getting into the hard rough work of the Service at every opportunity, with the Rangers, and so acquiring experience of your own.

My earnest advice, therefore, to every prospective member of the Forest Service, in whatever grade you enter, is to don a pair of overalls and a jumper at the first opportunity, grasp the first tool which offers, be it a transit or a scaling stick or a mattock, and get into the game hard.